



**MEMORANDUM**  
9 OCTOBER 2004

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TO: BOARD OF DIRECTORS

FROM: DAVID MERRITT

RE: STATE-WIDE WATER SUPPLY INITIATIVE

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As over half of the Board has been participating in this process as a Roundtable Members from their individual Basins, or as Technical Advisors, this will be just a brief update. The process is nearing completion of this first phase, with a preliminary draft due to the CWCB by 1 November, presentation to the CWCB Board Meeting in Denver on November 15<sup>th</sup>, and a final report to the Legislature by December 1<sup>st</sup>. All the Basin Roundtable meetings series have been completed, with the majority of the Basins having four meetings. The North Platte and the Rio Grande Basins were content to meet just three times.

This first phase focused on the current demands within each basin, as well as the anticipated demands(using 2030 as a Planning Horizon) which would not be supplied by projects already underway, or expected to be underway. This determination of what was expected to be underway was what caused a great amount of confusion in the process. Most organizations did not particularly want to get the State involved in their planning process, thus wanted to have any near term projects excluded from consideration. However, this had the effect of making the short fall of current supply to expected future needs seem smaller than it might actually be, especially if some of the projects in planning had many hurdles to overcome. There was also concern over the lack of communication with other basins. While this phase was intended to only address in-basin needs, there was some concern that ignoring the transbasin issues might also ignore some in-basin shortages which may develop. It is expected that a subsequent phase (Phase Ib(?)) would occur in the January to June 2005 time frame, with leftover funding, to initiate communication among the basins.

Time will tell exactly how the study consultants manage to wrap up and package the results for the Legislature, but it is expected that this will serve to identify that there are enormous demands

on the Front Range, demands which can only be met by additional importation of water from Western Colorado.

I am attaching a Draft letter which is being circulated among various Headwaters representatives expressing some of the concerns with the process and its potential future direction.

October 8, 2004

Colorado Water Conservation Board  
1313 Sherman Street  
Room 721  
Denver, CO 80203

Dear Board Members:

At the August 25<sup>th</sup> SWSI meeting in Glenwood Springs the Colorado River Basin Roundtable members were asked to provide feedback on the SWSI project. As members of the Colorado River Basin Roundtable we are providing our comments on SWSI to you directly.

We are giving you this rather critical assessment of SWSI not to generate controversy but to communicate our experience with the project. The overall objective of SWSI is to provide a common understanding of the State's water supplies and demands and to help maintain adequate water supplies for Colorado citizens and the environment. Because the Basin Roundtables were limited in focus to their own respective basin there was no opportunity to develop an understanding of the planning and needs of entities who intend to use Colorado River water to meet their own projected demands. Likewise, the SWSI Roundtable meetings did not provide for discussions with the trans-mountain diverters on the localized impacts and issues associated with their current operations and future proposals. Only with a complete understanding of current and future trans-mountain diversions can an accurate assessment of local water availability be made. As a result we feel that SWSI has fallen short of achieving its objective.

The SWSI project was charged with the ambitious tasks of evaluating water demands and supplies, and alternatives to meet identified shortages. However, the level of analysis is just too gross to provide any useful new information about the Colorado River Basin. No new studies, data, or solutions emerged that represent progress toward meeting water supply demands or improving water resource management in general. SWSI demand projections are often different than those used by local water utilities for their own planning efforts, which is confusing and brings into question the accuracy and appropriateness of those figures. SWSI relies almost exclusively on information previously generated on potential projects or solutions to projected water supply shortages. Instream values, such as recreation and water quality, that are critical for protection of the economy and lifestyle in our basin were given only cursory consideration.

The flaws associated with the SWSI primarily from the scale of the assessment. However, we are concerned it may detract from legitimate on-going local water resource planning efforts. In fact, we are apprehensive that SWSI will mischaracterize Colorado's water resource picture and the study will be used by some to rationalize the sacrificing of the economy and environment of one area of the state to meet another area's growth-related water demands.

Water resource planning in Colorado has been done locally in large part because it is at this level that the most site-specific and accurate information can be developed that take into consideration unique social, environmental or political situations. It is most effective at this level and SWSI has confirmed that the State's role should be to support these efforts and not duplicate or subsume them.

In conclusion, we would like to commend the CWCB staff and consultants at doing the best job possible given their complexity of their task. The shortcomings associated with SWSI are a result of the nature and scope of the project, not the skills of the project team. We suggest that unless more effective and balanced statewide water resource planning can be done the funding would be better spent by providing assistance to and coordinating the results of on-going local water planning initiatives.

Sincerely,

Cc: Colorado Basin Legislators